(b) if so, what is the basis of determining the new criteria and reason for changing the old estimate?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) The Government is not planning to revise the existing methodology for fixing poverty lines. The present criterion for determining State specific poverty lines is based on the recommendations of the Expert Group headed by Prof. D.T. Lakdawala, which was adopted by the Planning Commission in 1997. The recommendations of the Expert Group have recieved wide acceptance.

Earlier the national level poverty line for rural areas was used uniformly for all the States. In the new method, separate poverty lines have been worked out for the States using the State-specific prices. The new poverty lines are considered better as these represents the cost of a national consumption basket evaluated at State's prices, and hence capture the inter state price differential.

Until 1997-98, the funds under major Centrally-sponsored rural poverty alleviation programmes, namely, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) and Million Wells Scheme (MWS) were allocated to States/UTs on the basis of 'Task Force estimates of poverty for 1987-88'. As the data for 1993-94 became available estimates of poverty based on these data were calculated using both the Task Force methodology and the Expert Group methodology. However, a comparison of Statewise share of poor as per Task Force for 1993-94 and as per Expert Group for 1993-94 revealed that some States were adversely affected in their respecitve share of allocation under various poverty alleviation programmes by the adoption of the Expert Group estimates. Some States which had been adversely affected represented to the Union Government on this issue. Consequently, an exercise was undertaken to work out an adjustment formula to contain the losses under the Expert Group estimates to not more than 15 per cent of their expected entitlement based on the Task Force methodology for 1993-94. These adjusted shares are presently being used for allocation of funds under major rural poverty alleviation programmes.

As per the decision of the National Development Council (NDC) a Committee has been set-up under the Chairmanship of Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission to finalise the criterion for allocation of funds under major rural poverty alleviation programmes.

Network of Kerosene Oil and LPG in Tamil Nadu

*355. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to increase the network of kerosene oil and the LPG distribution in Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NALTURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In addition to the locations pending from previous marketing plans, 5 SKO/LDO dealerships and 154 LPG distributorship have been included in the Marketing Plans 1996-98 for Tamil Nadu. As per existing policy, oil companies advertise the locations included in the approved Marketing Plans under different reserved categories in two newspapers, one an English daily and the other a vernacular daily, inviting applications from the candidates meeting the eligibility criteria re-

lating to nationality, age, educational qualification, residence, income, multiple dealership norms, etc. Selection of the dealers/distributors from amongst the eligible candidates is made by duly constituted Dealer Selection Boards. The selection process is already on.

(c) Does not arise.

Space Programmes for Rural Upliftment

*356. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are utilising the Space programme for rural upliftment;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) to which regions this programme is being beamed at present; and

(d) what has been the response of the people thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government is using Satellite TV transmission for rural development.

(b) The Department of Space in coordination with Ministry of Rural Development and the State Government of Madhya Pradesh is conducting a Project called Jhabua Development Communication Project (JDCP). This project is providing development programmes through Satellite Television to the tribal villages in Jhabua District in M.P.

(c) This Programme is presently being beamed to the villages in Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh.

(d) Response studies show that there is perceptible knowledge increase among the people.

Sardar Sarovar Dam

*357. SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state that keeping in view the reference to the Cauvery Accord as a precedent and reference in the President's address what are the initiatives Government propose to take for the Sardar Sarovar Dam reaching a stage when water will be diverted to the Main Canal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL): Although the matter is subjudice, efforts are on for arriving at an amicable solution within the framework of the Award of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal.

Oil Import Bill

*358. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country's Oil import bill of Rs. 35,280 crores is likely to come down to Rs. 26,000 crores due to a fall in international prices and drop in demand due to a lower growth rate in this sector; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons that Government are not passing on this benefit to the public?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) The oil import bill depends upon the consumption, quantum of imports, and prevailing prices from time to time. The outgo on imports is now expected to be US $6451.9 million as against an original projection in the Oil Economy Budget (1998-99) of US $8418.10 million.

(b) The Government had decided to dismantle the Administered price Mechanism in the petroleum sector in phases. Consequently, oil companies have been allowed to fix the prices based on